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ASSISTANCE

Letter dated 4 November 1993 from the Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the document containing the Emergency Locust Control Plan drawn up by the experts from the countries of the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA) and of the Sahel at the ad hoc Sahel/Maghreb meeting on the locust situation held at Tunis (Tunisia) on 1 and 2 September 1993.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda items 91 (e) and (f), 98, 99 and 100.

(Signed) Slaheddine ABDELLAH
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

ANNEX

REPORT OF THE AD HOC SAHEL/MAGHREB MEETING ON THE LOCUST SITUATION, TUNIS (TUNISIA), 1-2 SEPTEMBER 1993

THE LOCUST SITUATION AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

Current situation

The current resurgence of the desert locust is continuing, with reports of more serious infestations in India and Pakistan.

Large-scale reproduction has taken place over extensive areas in Taharparkar and the Cholistan deserts in Pakistan, as well as in the adjacent areas of Rajasthan in India. The majority of the infestations consist of bands of fifth-stage larvae. More than 80,000 hectares have been treated in India. The area treated in Pakistan is not known as of now.

In the Sudan, reproduction has taken place over large areas, but has probably been on a small scale in relation to India and Pakistan. Most of the infestations detected to date are in the areas around El Obeid in Northern Kordofan, and close to Derudeb in the eastern region, and consist of bands of small to medium-sized last-stage larvae. Probably, similar infestations are also present both in northern Darfur and north of El Obeid, where conditions for reproduction are favourable.

In Somalia, the locust situation is serious, and swarms have recently been reported. Airborne control operations will be carried out from early September.

In West Africa, the arrival of gregarious swarms from the central region was reported between 26 June and 20 July. A first wave of swarms passed through Chad, in the border region with the Sudan, between 26 and 29 June; through East Niger, from Bilma and Dikrou on 28 and 29 June and then through the Arlit region from 4 to 6 July; through the Tinkar (Timétrine), Aguelhok and Kidal regions of Mali between 5 and 10 July; and, lastly, through the Tidjikdja, Tichitt, El Gueddiya, Boumdeit and Kiffa regions of Mauritania from 17 to 25 July. The swarms observed in this last country cover areas of between 250 and 2,500 hectares.

Reproduction of gregarious populations has been observed, and is still taking place, in Mali and above all in Mauritania. With respect to Niger, no precise information is available.

In Chad, the surveys under way have not revealed any locust activity.

In Mauritania, numerous bands of larvae, generally between 1/4 hectare and 50 hectares in extent, have been observed over the whole strip extending from Tidjikdja in the north to Kiffa in the south, and between Magta Lahjar in the west and Tintane in the east.

Currently, the predominant larva stages are stages IV and V. Young winged forms have even been reported. The areas treated from 1 August to the end of the month amount to 18,800 hectares.

In Mali, survey and treatment teams have been mobilized since 24 August.

Future outlook

The available data suggest that ecological conditions are generally favourable to reproduction in the desert locust breeding areas of West Africa.

The first generation produced by the swarms that arrive from the Central region is developing in Mauritania, and perhaps also in Mali and Niger.

Young winged forms are already appearing in Mauritania.

Beginning in mid-September, the swarms from the current reproduction cycle will move towards the centre and north of Mauritania or towards the south-west (the Mauritanian coast or the valley of the Senegal), depending on climatic conditions (wind and rain). The possibility that some of these swarms may move in the direction of Morocco or south-west Algeria cannot be totally excluded.

The swarms which will reproduce in Mauritania beginning in late September will spawn very large larva populations.

If appropriate steps are not immediately taken in Mauritania to eliminate this generation, in October the new swarms will migrate towards North Africa, particularly Morocco and Algeria.

In Mali and Niger swarms will probably move in September, either towards Mauritania, where they will increase the existing locust potential, or towards Algeria and Morocco.

Furthermore, there is no information on the locust situation in western Sudan (Darfur).

In India and Pakistan, the locust situation has worsened significantly, but it will not directly affect the locust invasion in West Africa in 1993. However, if these populations are not destroyed, they may aggravate the situation in the central region in the spring of 1994 and in the western region in the summer of 1994.

Accordingly, a comprehensive strategy needs to be developed, and plans for regional operations drawn up and instituted immediately.

Measures adopted by the Maghreb-Sahel countries and FAO

All the countries represented at the meeting described the mechanisms in place and the measures they had taken to combat the invasion in their territories.

The following actions have been taken to organize prevention and control operations:

(a) Establishment and/or reactivation of central, regional and local control agencies;

(b) Inventorying and reconditioning of anti-locust equipment and materials;

(c) Evaluation, analysis and distribution of insecticides at the operation-zone level;

(d) Assembly and training of technical and support staff to supervise the control operations;

(e) Start-up of detection and control units in the infested areas;

(f) Deployment of the Maghreb Intervention Force (FMI) in Mauritania and Mali.

FAO has taken emergency measures through technical cooperation programmes (TCPs) in the infested countries, and appeals to the international community by its Director-General have raised enough money to meet the organization's initial financial estimates.

Emergency plan

In the light of the locust situation in the western part of the area of the invasion and its probable progression, the participants acknowledged the absolute necessity of implementing emergency measures in September 1993 in the most heavily infested zones, located in southern and central Mauritania and northern Mali, which constitute a reservoir for the spread of the problem.

The primary objective of the emergency plan is to get the larval and winged infestations in these regions under control as soon as possible so that any further spread of the invasion can be prevented.

The following additional resources are needed to implement this plan:

1. For Mauritania

   100,000 litres of insecticide

   300 helicopter flight-hours

   US$ 130,000 for operational expenses in addition to the financial resources already mobilized

2. For Mali

   50,000 litres of insecticide

   100 helicopter flight-hours

   US$ 125,000 for operational expenses

3. For the Maghreb Intervention Force

A provisional requirement of US$ 450,000 in funding to cover the cost of continued Maghreb Intervention Force detection and control operations in Mauritania and Mali for the period October to December 1993.

4. For Chad

Additional resources are needed to improve control in the reproduction zones along the Sudanese border. The principal requirements are:

20,000 litres of insecticides

100 aircraft flight-hours

US$ 50,000 in operational expenses

RECOMMENDATIONS

Action in the short term

1. Finance the emergency plan for Mauritania, Mali and Chad as outlined above.

2. Secure emergency stocks of pesticides, treatment and camping equipment, and sufficient protective material and flying time to be able to deal with any justifiable request in the region.

3. Mobilize the financial resources needed to operate units of the Maghreb Intervention Force at the level of the zones recognized as strategic for the period September to December 1993, and funds for the transfer of pesticides to Mauritania and Mali.

4. Ensure communications and speedy exchange of information among the countries concerned by circulating the specialized bulletins put out by the FAO Emergency Centre for Locust Operations (ECLO), the Joint Anti-Locust and Anti-Aviarian Organization (OCLALAV), and the FAO Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in North-West Africa (CCDLNWA) more frequently. Work out and put into effect modalities for using the region's existing radio network.

5. Ensure that surveys are carried out in each country, backed by joint monitoring at the regional level, the teams with appropriate wheeled vehicles and radio equipment, and meet their operational and related expenses for their operation.

6. Because of the difficulties that have been encountered in speedy ground action against the existing populations of larvae and winged forms in the region, the use of helicopters to improve emergency intervention is recommended. This means that considerable logistical means such as a liaison and transport aircraft must be mobilized.

7. Prepare a Maghreb-Sahel "directory" of locust control operators (PC Coordinating Committee, regional authorities, treatment firms, ...).

8. Study and make provision for the technical, administrative and regulatory conditions and modalities for ground and/or air intervention in treatment of frontier zones, whenever the situation demands it.

Action in the medium term

Although the urgency of the current locust situation and the probability that it will deteriorate further call for immediate measures, special attention should be given to preparing the operations of the 1994 winter-spring campaign.

Provision should therefore be made in 1993 for the following activities:

1. Re-examination by an ad hoc group under the auspices of FAO of the strategy and arrangements for locust control and proposal of integrated regional action plans aimed at a global solution of the locust problem.

2. Organization, with support from FAO and other donors, of training and/or retraining courses in:

(a) Ground and air dusting and the maintenance of treatment equipment;

(b) Practical organization of treatment sites;

(c) Preventive measures for human and environmental protection;

(d) Techniques and methods of storing insecticides and recycling containers.

3. Mobilization of the funds needed for the MIF for 1994 and 1995, US$ 500,000 a year.

4. Provision of weather station coverage in the Sahel by financing the joint project established for that purpose by the countries of the region.

5. Development, through the use of satellite and weather station data, of estimates of probable rainfall in Saharan zones and low-level wind fields.